



## **GHN On My Mind: Larry Luterman, Hilton Worldwide**



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### **Behind the Meetings: Travel Industry Unites as One Voice**

Anyone who has attended a meeting and closed a deal with a handshake knows the importance of meetings, conferences, conventions, incentive travel, trade shows and exhibitions. These platforms create an opportunity for professionals to come together and put leadership and collaboration behind business decisions.

According to a new [study by the Convention Industry Council](#), during the 2012 calendar year, 1.83 million meetings were held in the U.S., attended by 225 million participants, which contributed more than \$115 billion to U.S. GDP. The majority of these meeting participants traveled 50 miles or more to attend a meeting – staying in hotel rooms, eating at restaurants and frequenting local businesses. When meetings come to town, everybody benefits. The face-to-face industry creates jobs, generates commerce and creates a lasting impact in the community.

Simply put: great things happen when meetings take place – the economy blooms, colleagues collaborate, innovation happens and participants form new and stronger relationships.

Leaders within the travel community understand the significance of the meetings and events industry and it's far reaching economic impact. In 2012, the industry employed nearly 1.8 million people and generated \$243.6 billion in total labor income (CIC). Working in the meetings and events industry provides a pathway for career growth and professional development. It's common to encounter a professional who started welcoming hotel guests at the front desk and grew his or her career to assume a role in corporate leadership. The breadth



and variety of career paths within our industry, and the travel industry at large, offer exciting opportunities for advancement and professional fulfillment.

Along with its unique position to advance careers and influence private-sector business, meetings and conferences are an essential tool for departments and agencies across government. They facilitate effective information sharing, taxpayer services, and collaboration with other agencies and private-sector partners in a way that cannot be accomplished by other means.

Despite vastly positive outcomes, the world of in-person meetings and events is often mischaracterized. That's why in January, influential leaders from across the travel industry launched [Meetings Mean Business](#) – an information and advocacy campaign that highlights the industry's role in creating jobs, generating economic value and driving business success.

For the first time the industry is united behind a proactive campaign to tell our story and educate decision makers about our exceptional value. In fact, we are already hard at work promoting these messages.

Meetings Mean Business [brings together powerful](#) voices like Roger Dow (U.S. Travel), David Peckinpaugh (Maritz Travel) and Christine Duffy (CLIA) with other leaders from business, professional association and destination marketing organizations. The strength of the campaign comes from this coalition – a representation of all sectors within industry – from hotels, to cruise lines, to convention centers and major destinations. Together, our goal is to educate industry stakeholders, policymakers and individuals about the tangible and positive impact we have on a variety of businesses and local economies.

This is just the start of a new conversation – and we look forward to working across our industry and with our stakeholders. To find out more about Meetings Mean Business, visit [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com).

*Hilton Worldwide is a long-standing member of GlobalHotelNetwork.com and Hilton's President and CEO Christopher Nassetta is a member of GHN's [Advisory Editorial Board](#).*

